

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-20

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO ALL AMERICAN REPUBLIC DIPLOMATIC POSTS IMMEDIATE

XMT AMEMBASSY PANAMA

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E.O. 11652:DECONTROL 8.31.74

TAGS: PFOR, PN, CU

SUBJECT: PANAMA RESUMPTION OF RELATIONS WITH CUBA

FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF PRESS GUIDANCE PREPARED FOR DEPARTMENT
OF STATE SPOKESMAN:

Q: HOW DOES THE USG VIEW PANAMA'S REESTABLISHMENT OF RELATIONS WITH CUBA?

A: IT CONTINUES TO BE OUR VIEW THAT THE OAS DIPLOMATIC AND ECONOMIC SANCTIONS, IMPOSED COLLECTIVELY BY OAS MEMBERS IN 1964, SHOULD BE ADHERED TO UNLESS THEY ARE LIFTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE TERMS OF THE 1964 OAS RESOLUTION. WE BELIEVE THAT ANY CHANGE IN THE OAS SANCTIONS SHOULD RESULT FROM COLLECTIVE ACTION BY THE OAS MEMBER STATES AND NOT THROUGH UNILATERAL DECISIONS.

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WE THEREFORE REGRET THAT THE PANAMA GOVERNMENT PROCEEDED OUTSIDE THE OAS.

Q: DID THE USG KNOW IN ADVANCE OF THIS INTENDED ACTION?

A: YES.

Q: HOW WAS THE USG INFORMED AND WAS THE USG ACTUALLY CONSULTED?

A: I DON'T WANT TO GET INTO THE DETAILS, BUT I CAN SAY THAT AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS OCCURRED.

Q: DID THE USG TRY TO DISSUADE PANAMA FROM THIS ACTION?

A: IN THE EXCHANGE BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS, WE EXPLAINED OUR POSITION.

Q: WAS THE SECRETARY HIMSELF INVOLVED IN THAT EXCHANGE?

A: AS I SAID, I DON'T WANT TO GET INTO THE DETAILS BUT I CAN SAY THAT APPROPRIATE LEVEL AUTHORITIES ON BOTH SIDES PARTICIPATED IN IT.

Q: WHY DID PANAMA TAKE THE ACTION UNILATERALLY, AND AT THIS TIME?

A: I WOULD SUGGEST YOU ADDRESS THAT QUESTION TO PANAMANIAN AUTHORITIES.

Q: HOW DOES THIS UNILATERAL ACTION BY PANAMA AFFECT THE TREATY NEGOTIATIONS?

A: THE U.S. INTENDS TO PURSUE THE NEGOTIATIONS. I DO NOT WANT TO SPECULATE ON WHAT EFFECT ON THEM PANAMA'S ACTION WILL HAVE.

Q: HOW ARE THE NEGOTIATIONS GOING?

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A: AMB. BUNKER AND HIS DEPUTY HAVE BEEN VISITING PANAMA REGULARLY IN RECENT MONTHS, AND PROGRESS HAS BEEN ACHIEVED. BOTH PARTIES HAVE AGREED THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD BE CONDUCTED CAREFULLY, METHODICALLY, AND WITH ALL DELIBERATE SPEED.

Q: HAS NOT PANAMA BEEN DEALING A LOT WITH CUBA IN THE PAST?

A: I BELIEVE THERE HAVE BEEN SOME INTERCHANGES OF A CULTURAL AND SPORTS NATURE.

Q: DOESN'T THE USG PERCEIVE SOME THREAT TO THE CANAL'S SECURITY BY VIRTUE OF A CUBAN PRESENCE IN PANAMA?

A: I WOULD THINK THAT PANAMA IS AS INTERESTED IN THE CANAL'S SECURITY AS THE U.S. IS -- THE CANAL IS A MAIN-STAY OF THAT COUNTRY'S ECONOMY.

Q: ON THE NEGOTIATIONS, WON'T SOME MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESS REACT PRETTY STRONGLY TO PANAMA'S ACTION, AND BE MORE AVERSE THAN EVER TO A NEW TREATY?

A: I REALLY DON'T WANT TO COMMENT ON THAT. I THINK ANY CONGRESSIONAL REACTIONS SHOULD COME DIRECTLY FROM MEMBERS OF CONGRESS.

Q: WASN'T THERE A DEMONSTRATION THE OTHER DAY IN FRONT OF OUR EMBASSY IN PANAMA? ANY CONNECTION?

A: I UNDERSTAND THAT SECONDARY STUDENTS DEMONSTRATED AS A RESULT OF A DISPUTE BETWEEN THE PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT AND THE UNITED BRANDS COMPANY OVER THE COMPANY'S HALTING OF BANANA SHIPMENTS AND THAT THERE WAS NO CONNECTION BETWEEN THAT DEMONSTRATION AND PANAMA'S ACTION REGARDING CUBA.

Q: ISN'T THE U.S BECOMING INCREASINGLY ISOLATED ON THIS ISSUE AS COUNTRY AFTER COUNTRY RESUMES RELATIONS WITH CUBA?

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SUGGESTED REPLY: THE OAS SANCTIONS CONTINUE TO BE RESPECTED BY A MAJORITY OF GOVERNMENTS PARTY TO THE RIO TREATY. AT PRESENT, FIVE STATES PARTY TO THE TREATY (MEXICO, PERU, ARGENTINA, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, AND NOW PANAMA) HAVE RELATIONS WITH CUBA. THIS MEANS THAT 16 DO NOT AND CONTINUE TO ADHERE TO THE SANCTIONS. (THE FOLLOWING COUNTRIES ALSO HAVE RELATIONS WITH CUBA BUT ARE NOT SIGNATORIES TO THE RIO TREATY: JAMAICA, BARBADOS AND GUYANA.)

DEPARTMENT HAS ALREADY RESPONDED TO FIRST AND LAST QUESTION AND WILL USE THE REST ON AN IF-ASKED BASIS ONLY. KISSINGER

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